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REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCLUDING DOCUMENT OF THE TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY: UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL CENTRE FOR PEACE AND DISARMAMENT IN AFRICA, UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL CENTRE FOR PEACE AND DISARMAMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC AND UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL CENTRE FOR PEACE, DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 12 December 1995, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 50/71 D, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific". By that resolution, the General Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-first session on the activities of the Regional Centre.

2. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

II. ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRE FROM AUGUST 1995 TO JULY 1996

3. The Secretary-General is of the strong opinion that the mandate of the Regional Centre not only remains valid but is even more relevant today in the changed international environment. He believes that the Centre could be a useful instrument for fostering a climate of cooperation and disarmament in the region in the post-cold-war era. Indeed, consultations carried out by the Director with Member States and scholars within and outside the region have confirmed the continuing support for the Centre's role in encouraging regional and subregional dialogue for the enhancement of openness, transparency and confidence-building, and the promotion of disarmament and security. In this connection, the usefulness of regional meetings organized by the Centre or research studies, as appropriate, conducted by it of issues of concern to Member States in the region has been strongly reiterated.

4. In line with this approach, and despite limited financial resources available during the reporting period, the Centre was able to organize two major regional meetings at Kathmandu, and at Hiroshima, Japan, respectively. The entire costs of both meetings were financed from voluntary contributions of Member States and other interested organizations.

5. The first of these two meetings, entitled "Priority issues on the current disarmament agenda: global and regional concerns", was held at Kathmandu from 21 to 24 February 1996. This meeting, the eighth in its series, was attended by 37 representatives from Governments, research institutes, the mass media and non-governmental organizations. The meeting focused on nuclear disarmament issues such as the status of the negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, nuclear-weapon-free zones and transfer of technology. It also discussed activities of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). As regards conventional disarmament, it dealt with the concept of micro-disarmament, proliferation of small arms and confidence-building measures. Regional initiatives to develop region-oriented disarmament approaches as a supplement to global measures were also considered. Major presentations made at the meeting will be published by the Centre.

6. A one-day workshop on "The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms: the experience of the Asia-Pacific region" was held on 24 February 1996, in the framework of the Kathmandu meeting, with the financial support of the Government of Australia. The workshop brought together diplomats, government officials, scholars and researchers representing 17 countries from within and outside the

region. It provided a timely opportunity to debate and clarify the operation of the Register and participation in the Register process since its establishment in 1992. Particular emphasis was placed on the participation of States from the Asia-Pacific region, on a discussion of possible regional approaches to the Register, and on the prospects of the review of the Register envisaged to take place in 1997.

7. The regional dialogue promoted by the Centre through the annual meetings in the region has come to be known as the "Kathmandu process". The continuation of this process as a means of identifying pressing disarmament and security issues and exploring region-oriented solutions has gained the strong support of Member States and academic groups within the region. Strong support has also been expressed for the idea of creating a close network, linking the Centre and its interlocutors within the region, as a way of exchanging data and information related to disarmament and security. The Secretary-General is gratified with the support given to the "Kathmandu process" in the region.

8. It should be noted that recognizing the importance of the "Kathmandu process", the Council for Security and Cooperation in the Asia Pacific Region (CSCAP), an organization of academic and research institutes in Asia and the Pacific, has amended its Charter so as to grant observer status to the Centre in September 1995, the very first observer ever admitted.

9. The second regional event was a conference on disarmament issues entitled "Common efforts towards a safer and nuclear-weapon-free world", held at Hiroshima, Japan, from 17 to 20 July 1996, organized by the Centre in cooperation with the Prefecture and City of Hiroshima, as well as the Government of Japan. A total of 65 participants and 22 observers from Governments, research institutes, non-governmental organizations and the media within and outside the region attended the conference.

10. The conference addressed various issues such as a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, the role of nuclear weapons and deterrence in the post-cold-war era, nuclear safety and the prospect of a nuclear-weapon-free world. The conference addressed in particular the remaining unresolved issues at the final stage of the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. In addition, in the course of the discussions, the participants addressed the meaning of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, of 8 July 1996, regarding the legality of the use of nuclear weapons. Proliferation of small weapons, prohibition of land mines, and the relationship between the level of conflicts and the transfer of conventional weapons were examined as the emerging new issues in the field of conventional disarmament. Furthermore, the conference addressed specific security and disarmament issues in the Asia-Pacific region, including confidence-building measures and regional security and the relationship between modernization of weapons and national economic prosperity. The papers presented at the conference will be published by the Centre.

11. At the request of the United Nations Association of Japan (UNAJ), the Centre assisted in the organization of a symposium on "North-east Asian cooperation", held at Kanazawa, Japan, from 3 to 5 June 1996. The symposium dealt with many issues related to the subregion, including the development of

common and shared values, economic and technical cooperation and non-military challenges. The Director of the Centre attended the symposium at the invitation of UNAJ.

12. As a way of promoting cooperation and mutual interaction between the Centre and CSCAP (see para. 8 above), the Director of the Centre attended a meeting of the CSCAP Working Group on Confidence and Security Measures in Asia and the Pacific, held in Washington, D.C., on 22 and 23 April 1996. The meeting held wide-ranging discussions on regionalization of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the peaceful use of nuclear energy and development of a generic Asia-Pacific defence paper.

III. STAFFING AND FINANCE

13. Persistent serious financial constraints have made it impossible for the Centre to recruit any local support staff. For this reason, the Director continued to operate from United Nations Headquarters in New York, an arrangement that will have to remain in force until a reliable means can be found to finance the Centre's operational costs at Kathmandu. In the meantime, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Information Office at Kathmandu have continued to provide the Centre with logistic support for the meeting held there each year.

14. Since the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/50/380), voluntary contributions in the amount of $51,168.64 have been pledged to the Centre, and a total of $40,751.16 has been received as of July 1996, which includes prior pledges for the years 1993, 1994 and 1995. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Governments of Austria, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Sweden and Thailand, as well as to Rissho Kosei-Kai, a Japanese non-governmental organization, for their contributions, and to the Government of Nepal for its overall support of the Centre. While appreciating the substantive contributions received, the Secretary-General appeals to Member States to continue to make voluntary contributions to the Centre in order to ensure its viability and enhance its effective functioning.